

and the route along which they had travelled, they were and are alike in one respect Not only had they reached the same intellectual resting-place, to do so was of vital significance, in either case To both of them Descartes's superb assertion fully applies *Cogito ergo sum* I think, therefore I am it is not a phrase descriptive of the majority of humans It is, it was, descriptive of Sidney Webb and of Beatrice Potter If it accounts for their difficulty in understanding other people it also is the secret of their instant recognition when they met, and of the "integrated relationship" they were able to build on that recognition

Of course, in the 'nineties—in that respect very unlike the mneteen-thirties,—people, whether or no they did think, believed sincerely that they ought to do so, that they could, and that great results would come of the process There was an immense amount of cogitation going on This belief that thinking could find a way, coupled with a general, confident optimism about the result, make the characteristic colour of the mental climate of the 'eighties and 'nineties It was the climate in which both Sidney and Beatrice grew up, and is in degree the climate they have, thanks to their association, maintained round themselves ever since

We are apt, nowadays, to talk of mid-Victorian complacency Complacency is not however really the right word, so far as the last two decades of the nineteenth century are concerned Smugness did persist, but it was being assailed from every side Then everybody, it

is true,
believed, formally at any rate, in Democracy
but there
was no other social or economic
arrangement, and few
moral or intellectual prescriptions, not being
challenged
But while some challenged, everybody hoped,
and most
people believed in something or other The
mood of the
challengers was one of confidence There was
a robust
moral infusion in the most devastating
criticism being
offered of any specific institution or belief In
the social